

## Sex Education Forum response to Public Consultation on the National Curriculum review: final draft proposals

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[The Sex Education Forum](#) (SEF), hosted by the National Children's Bureau, is the national authority in England on sex and relationships education (SRE). It is a unique collaboration of member organisations and practitioners with representatives from health, education, faith, disability and children's organisations. The Sex Education Forum believes that all children and young people have the right to good SRE.

### Final draft of the National Curriculum proposals

#### Summary

The Sex Education Forum is pleased that the new National Curriculum documents explain that 'sex and relationship education' is a requirement for all state secondary schools. We also see the inclusion of puberty in Year 5 science as a step forward.

We believe that the revised National Curriculum must ensure that ALL children and young people are entitled to a comprehensive and developmental programme of sex education through science. **The current proposals fail to do this and ignore recommendations made repeatedly by experts from health, education and children's organisations.**

The National Curriculum must give clear direction to schools to teach pupils about growing up and sex with honesty and confidence. It should also enable parents to understand what their children learn about their bodies. This would help safeguard children and would fulfill the government ambition to promote an open and honest culture about sex and relationships as set out in the Framework for Sexual Health Improvement (March 2013).

The National Curriculum alone will not achieve all of this; the government should provide clear guidance to schools about their obligations to provide high quality sex and relationships education (SRE), in the context of PSHE, to meet the needs of their pupils.



## **We recommend that the restrictive notes are removed:**

- a) The retrogressive note stating 'they should not be expected to understand how reproduction occurs' should be removed;
- b) The note stating that the menstrual cycle should be taught 'without details of hormones' should be removed.

These notes are inappropriate because they are restrictive and proscriptive. There is a separate law stating that sex education should not use inappropriate materials. As government have frequently stated; teachers should be trusted to use their judgment about how they teach about human reproduction in an age and culturally-appropriate manner.

## **We recommend that genitalia and human reproduction are included in primary science:**

- c) It should be clear that children can be taught to name external genitalia at Key stage 1 (either by removing the list of examples of body parts currently given, or by adding vulva, vagina, penis and testicles to the list, or by including a note stating that naming body parts should include 'differences between boys and girls').
- d) It should be clear that examples of humans be used (as well as animals) to explain conception and birth at Key stage 2.

## **We recommend that sexual health is included in secondary science**

- e) At KS3 the original content on sexual health and disease, contraception, and adolescence should be retained.

## **Who supports these recommendations?**

The widespread support from parents and the public for sex and relationships education teaching in schools is clearly demonstrated by:

- New data in the End Violence Against Women Coalition report 'Deeds or Words' (May 2013) finding that **86% of UK adults** believe sex and relationships education (SRE) should be compulsory in schools. The poll was carried out in April with over 2000 adults.
- **88% of the 1000 parents polled** for the National Association of Head Teachers believe 'sex education and lessons on adult and peer relationships should be mandatory in schools' (NAHT, May 2013).

- **The Office of the Children’s Commissioner urges the** government to send a clear message to schools that they must teach sex and relationships education that is relevant to young people's lives as this will help build their resilience (Basically ...porn is everywhere, May 2013)
- **Ofsted** found (in their 2013 PSHE report) that: “Younger pupils [in the schools Ofsted visited] had not always learnt the correct names for sexual body parts ... This is of particular concern in the light of the recent, much publicised trials in different parts of England concerning the grooming and sexual exploitation of children.”
- **The government ‘Framework for Sexual Health Improvement in England’** (Department of Health, 2013) highlights gaps in knowledge about contraception and fertility and sets out an ambition to “Increase knowledge and awareness of all methods of contraception among all groups in the local population”.
- **Child protection, health experts and family organizations** documented their support by signing a letter published in the Telegraph on 19 July 2013:

Hilary Eldridge, Chief Executive, Lucy Faithful Foundation  
 Professor John Ashton, President, UK Faculty of Public Health  
 Dr Peter Carter, Chief Executive, Royal College of Nursing  
 Reg Bailey, Chief Executive, Mother's Union (Government appointed Independent Reviewer of the Commercialisation and Sexualisation of Childhood)

It was also signed by Rosina St James, Chair, British Youth Council - a group of 263 youth organizations, and the 359 Elected Members of the Youth Parliament

- **Support throughout the youth, health and education sector** was demonstrated in a letter to the Secretary of State for Education signed by 69 organisations.

Jane Lees, Chair, Sex Education Forum  
 Hilary Emery, Chief Executive, National Children's Bureau  
 Dr Anthony Falconer, President, Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists  
 Dr Chris Wilkinson, President, Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Health  
 Dr Peter Carter, Chief Executive and General Secretary, Royal College of Nursing  
 Dr Janet Wilson, President, British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH)  
 Dr Adrian Palfreeman, Chair, British HIV Association (BHIVA)  
 Professor Lindsey Davies, President, Faculty of Public Health  
 Justine Roberts, Co-founder and Chief Executive, Mumsnet  
 Reg Bailey, Chief Executive, The Mother's Union  
 Sir Nick Partridge, Chief Executive, Terrence Higgins Trust  
 Simon Blake OBE, Chief Executive, Brook  
 Audrey Simpson OBE, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Family Planning Association (fpa)  
 Tracey McNeill, Senior Vice President, Marie Stopes International  
 Sheila Taylor, Chief Executive, NWG Network - Tackling Sexual Exploitation

British Youth Council  
UK Youth Parliament  
Unite/CPHVA  
International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)  
Joe Hayman, CEO, PSHE Association  
John Rees, Chair, NSCoPSE  
Jenny Rowley, Chair, NHEG  
Jeremy Todd, Chief Executive, Family Lives  
Kevin Williams, Chief Executive, KIDS  
Helen Lansdown, Chief Executive Officer, Deafax  
Fiona Blacke, Chief Executive, National Youth Agency  
Andrew Copson, Chief Executive, British Humanist Association  
Rabbi Dr Jonathan Romain MBE, Chair, Accord Coalition for Inclusive Education  
Terry Sanderson, President, National Secular Society  
Diana Whitmore, Chief Executive, Teens and Toddlers  
Jonathan Bartley, Co-Director, Ekklesia  
Ruth Sunderland, Chief Executive, Relate  
Ruth Lowbury, Chief Executive, MEDFASH (Medical Foundation for HIV & Sexual Health)  
Martin Tod, Chief Executive, Men's Health Forum  
Alison Hadley OBE, Life Member of the Sex Education  
Gill Frances OBE, Life Member, Sex Education Forum  
Lorna Scott, Life Member, Sex Education Forum  
Ruth Hilton, Core Member, Sex Education Forum  
Liz Swindon, Life Member, Sex Education Forum  
Sue Plant, Life Member, Sex Education Forum  
Hilary Dixon, Life Member, Sex Education Forum,  
Jason Royce, Director, Romance Academy  
Sarah Smith, Project Director, Esteem Resource Network  
Lynnette Smith, Proprietor, Big Talk Education  
Michelle Diaz, Director, MD Consultancy UK Ltd  
Boo Spurgeon, Head of PSHE, Forge Valley Community School  
Paula Power, Director, Christopher Winter Project Resources Ltd  
Revd. Jane Fraser, Manager, BodySense  
Susie McDonald, Director, Tender  
Steve Slack, Community Engagement Manager, Centre for HIV& Sexual Health  
Simon Ross, Chief Executive, Population Matters  
Hilary Pannack, CEO, Straight Talking

Yoan Reed and Lisa Nix, Co-directors, Teaching Lifeskills,  
Emily Kerr Muir, Campaign Director, Life in my shoes, Body and Soul  
Lesley Kerr-Edwards, CEO, Image in Action  
Dr Wondwossen Eshetu, Head of Programmes, Naz Project London  
Ellen Adams, Advocacy Coordinator, Sexpression: UK  
Maggie Walker, Chief Executive, ASDAN  
John Lloyd, President, Institute of Health Promotion and Education (IHPE)  
Derek McAuley, Chief Officer, General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches  
Susanne Rauprich, Chief Executive, National Council for Voluntary Youth Services  
Emma Thomas, CEO, YouthNet  
Thomas Lawson, Chief Executive, Leap - Confronting violence  
Martin Pendergast, Chairperson, Centre for the Study of Christianity & Sexuality  
Kath Broomhead, Development Worker, Parent to Parent  
British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS)  
BHA for Equality  
Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement (LGCM)  
Association of Young People's Health

- A letter published by the Times in April 2013 signed by **100 organisations and individuals** urges the government to make these changes <http://www.sexeducationforum.org.uk/policy-campaigns/letter-to-the-times-april-2013.aspx>

## References

EVAW (2013) The research was carried out by YouGov and was commissioned by the End Violence Against Women Coalition and reported as part of the 'Words or Deeds' report published by the EVAW Coalition in May 2013 [http://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/data/files/Deeds\\_or\\_Words\\_Report.pdf](http://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/data/files/Deeds_or_Words_Report.pdf)

Horvath, M and others (2013) 'Basically... porn is everywhere; A Rapid Evidence Assessment on the Effects that Access and Exposure to Pornography has on Children and Young People, Middlesex University London for the Office of the Children's Commissioner <http://www.mdx.ac.uk/Assets/BasicallyporniseverywhereReport.pdf>

NAHT (2013) The research was carried out in April 2013 by Research Now and was commissioned by the National Association of Headteachers (NAHT) and press released by NAHT in May 2013 <http://www.naht.org.uk/welcome/news-and-media/key-topics/parents-and-pupils/parents-want-schools-to-manage-dangers-of-pornography-says-survey/>

Ofsted (2013) 'Not yet good enough; personal, social, health and economic education in schools, Ofsted, May 2013 <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/not-yet-good-enough-personal-social-health-and-economic-education-schools>